

Libel Award for Howard Hunt Overturned by Appeals Court

ATLANTA, Dec. 3 (AP) — A Federal appeals court has thrown out a jury's libel award of \$650,000 to E. Howard Hunt Jr., a conspirator in the Watergate case, for an article that asserted the Central Intelligence Agency had planned to link Mr. Hunt to the assassination of President Kennedy.

A three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit ruled Monday, 2 to 1, that a new trial must be held in Mr. Hunt's libel lawsuit against Liberty Lobby of Washington, publisher of *The Spotlight*, a weekly newspaper.

The court ruled that the Federal judge in the suit's first trial in Florida gave jurors improper instructions for deciding whether Mr. Hunt had shown the newspaper acted with "actual malice."

The Supreme Court has held that such a finding is necessary in libel cases involving public figures. Mr. Hunt, who served 33 months in prison for his role in the break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, did not dispute his classification as a public figure.

A jury awarded Mr. Hunt \$100,000 in compensatory damages and \$550,000 in punitive damages. At the trial, *The Spotlight* acknowledged that Mr. Hunt had not been in Dallas on the day Mr. Kennedy was assassinated.